

VZCZCXRO5859
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #1163 3641004
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 291004Z DEC 08 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8970
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 001163

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - DECEMBER 29

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) The CNDP continued to accuse the FARDC of advancing into areas from which the CNDP had withdrawn in early December. FARDC denied the CNDP accusations and, according to MONUC, its investigators have also refuted the CNDP claims.

¶3. (SBU) USAID/DART staff received unconfirmed reports of fighting between CNDP and PARECO forces near Masisi town on December 24. MONUC reported that Mai Mai forces had looted various sites in Nyamilima, Vitshumbi, and Rwindi the weekend of December 27-28. Starting December 24, the FDLR has increased its troop levels in Virunga Park between Rwindi and Lake Edward, according to UN sources.

¶4. (SBU) On December 23, UN security officials met with the CNDP Liaison Committee in Rutshuru to discuss the recent spate of attacks against NGO staff and vehicles. The CNDP blamed the FDLR for the attacks, promising to take additional steps to prevent these attacks in CNDP-controlled territory.

¶5. (U) Radio Okapi reported that, according to an unnamed human rights activist, the CNDP has forcibly recruited five boys, aged 15 to 17, from the town of Kiwanja. CNDP officials denied these accusations, noting that many young men have "voluntarily joined the CNDP."

¶6. (U) DRC Defense Minister Mwanda Nsimba and DRC CHOD Didier Etumba arrived in Goma December 28, reportedly to meet with their Rwandan counterparts.

LRA - Operation Lightning Thunder

¶7. (U) Multiple media sources reported that LRA fighters attacked the village of Faradje, near the Sudanese border, on December 24 and ¶25. Original estimates of 20 deaths have been revised upward to over 75 civilian deaths, according to Medard Autσαι Senga, Governor of Orientale Province. Autσαι Senga added that the central government would soon send an important delegation to Faradje to "help the devastated population." MONUC transported approximately 100 FARDC soldiers to Faradje on December 26 to boost security and protect civilians.

¶8. (SBU) During a December 24 discussion with Goma PolOff, UNICEF Officer in Charge (OIC) for Eastern DRC said that LRA troops would almost certainly move towards the CAR. He added that LRA forces "know the area and have traveled the road many times." The OIC predicted that, unless the FARDC and MONUC establish authority in

remote areas, the LRA would return to Garamba Park, if the UPDF withdraws.

¶9. (SBU) The OIC said that UNICEF has a program, in conjunction with its Italian implementing partner Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), to rehabilitate and reintegrate LRA child soldiers. COOPI has accepted 32 LRA child soldiers since August, apparently successfully reintegrating the youth into their villages. UNICEF had taken on five LRA dependents who surrendered following the December 14 assault on LRA camps. According to the OIC, he has been in contact with UNICEF colleagues in Bangui to commence this program in the CAR, in the event LRA child soldiers appear in the CAR.

Humanitarian Situation -----

¶10. (SBU) According to OCHA, more than 15,000 families and 2,000 IDP households, originally displaced because of FARDC looting, have returned to Kanyabayonga. Humanitarian organizations have also registered accelerating returns in recent weeks to Bihamwe, Osso, and Matanda, all in Masisi Territory.

¶11. (SBU) Nevertheless, humanitarian organizations noted that more than 2,000 IDP families have recently registered in Masisi town. The humanitarian situation in Masisi could deteriorate with the new arrivals compounding growing concerns of food insecurity, as many families missed the planting season.

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